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ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Lincoln Association,

February 12, 1883,

BY

CHANCELLOR HARTSON.



ORATION
OF
CHANCELLOR HARTSON
AT THE
CELEBRATION OF THE 74TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
LINCOLN ASSOCIATION.

DASHAWAY HALL, POST ST., MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12th, 1883.

SAN FRANCISCO:
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1883.

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*Served with Abraham Lincoln in the same battalion in the Black Hawk War of 1831.

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ORATION

BY

HON. CHANCELLOR HARTSON.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Under the auspices of this worthy association we have met to celebrate the seventy-fourth birthday anniversary of our departed friend and benefactor—Abraham Lincoln. We have met here to-night to render homage to the illustrious dead, and to express our admiration for his virtues, our veneration for his piety, our gratitude for his achievements, and our attachment to the principles of a Republican form of government—to the principles of liberty and equality, for the establishment of which, our great commander with two hundred and fifty thousand brave companions, surrendered the joys of home, sundered the ties of friendship, endured the sufferings and

anguish of war, and finally gave up their lives a sacrifice in the cause of liberty and their country.

Abraham Lincoln was born in Hardin County, Kentucky, on the 12th day of February, in the year 1809. His father's name was Thomas Lincoln. He is described as good natured, careless, improvident, unambitious, and honest. His mother's maiden name was Mary Hanks. She was slender, pale, sad, and sensitive, possessing a heroic spirit and noble nature. She died in 1818, when her son, the subject of eulogy, was nine years of age. Although covered by the sods and wild flowers of the wilderness, and guarded by the spirits of the forest—when he was at a tender age—yet he always looked back to her sweet and patient example, to her efforts to inspire him with pure and noble motives, to her simple and earnest instruction in sacred truths, with unspeakable affection and gratitude; and in after life, when he had risen to place and power, in referring to her, with tears coursing down his care worn cheeks, he said : “ All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother—blessings on her memory.”

In 1816, when Abraham was seven years old, his father removed to Indiana. In 1830, when he was twenty-one years of age, his father accompanied by his son, each driving an ox team, emigrated from Indiana to the Sangamon River, in Illinois, and there

built a log cabin and settled. Mr. Lincoln was at this time six feet and four inches in height; of a sinewy and powerful frame, of great physical strength and courage, and fond of wrestling and field sports. He was frank, generous and sincere, abounding in mirth and good humor, with little education and no money. In 1832, two years after his settlement in Illinois, he enlisted in a company as a soldier for the Black Hawk War, of which company he was chosen captain, and served during the war. At its close he returned to his home and became postmaster, merchant and surveyor, and subsequently in 1834, at the age of twenty-five years, a member of the Illinois Legislature. The Legislature then sat at Vandalia, about one hundred miles from his residence. When the session opened he was at his seat, having made the journey on foot. At this time he began the study of law. It was at this period that his rapid march from obscurity and poverty to competence and renown begun.

At this period Mr. Lincoln began to display astonishing powers as a debater and orator. He possessed a most happy faculty of illustrating and embellishing his argument. His mind was one vast storehouse of facts and truths assorted and labeled, ready for use. He, on some occasions, showed himself master of wit and sarcasm, as well as argument and oratory. During his forensic encounters his eyes flashed with the spirit

of true inspiration, his countenance beamed with emotion, which, with his mobile and extraordinary facial expression, pointed every sentiment as it fell from his lips, exhibiting in his greatest oratorical efforts colossal grandeur of person as well as of intellect.

Sometimes he melted his hearers to tears with his deep pathos; sometimes he convulsed them with laughter by copious drafts upon his exhaustless stores of wit and humor; and at other times he commanded the will and led the intellect and passions captive by his logic and superior oratory.

He passed from the Legislature of his State to the National Congress, rising rapidly in positions and honor.

His fame in the legal tribunals, kept equal pace with that of the civil and political fields. He was retained in cases in court of the highest importance, involving varied and extensive knowledge of civil, criminal and constitutional law, and soon took a high place in the first rank of the eminent lawyers, jurists and statesmen of the Republic.

In 1860 his name was, by the people of the United States, inscribed on the roll of Presidents, side by side with that of Washington, Adams, and a long line of illustrious heroes and statesmen.

Mr. Lincoln neither sought nor shunned greatness, but became renowned because renown lay in the path

of duty. His motto was justice, inexorable justice, "though the heavens fall." In his whole life he illustrates the sentiment:

"Where justice grows, there
Grows the greatest grace."

When his ear was first saluted with the plaudits of the people for his clear and bold enunciation of truth, the eternal truths upon which the foundation of society rests (justice, equality and freedom) there was no cause for the invocation, "Teach me to feel another's woe;" for, while no one on earth attained a loftier position, but a short time before no one had occupied a more lowly.

It has fallen to the lot of few, if any, to experience more utter destitution than had been his portion in early life, and to none greater suffering than he experienced by the loss of his Angel Mother. His early experiences and wants and sufferings, and his later successes had prepared his great and noble soul to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice; and for sincere and heartfelt sympathy with all; and to temper justice with mercy; and he had drunk deep of the sentiment:

"Be just and fear not;
Let all thou aimest at be thy Country's,
Thy God's and Truth's; then, if thou fallest,
Thou fallest a blessed Martyr."

Phillip, the distinguished King of Macedon, once declared: "I am at peace only with those who are willing to obey me."

Alexander, Cæsar and Bonaparte, and an innumerable number, less known to fame, in every department of life, might have truthfully avowed the same selfish, despotic, and hostile spirit towards mankind.

Mr. Lincoln was governed entirely by different purposes, and entertained contrary principles. His greatness was always consistent with the exercise of universal benevolence, universal philanthropy, and of equal and exact justice—beautifully expressed in his last great Message; in his benediction to the American people, whom he loved so much and served so faithfully—"With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right; as God gives us to see the right." Amid calumny, persecution, threats and danger, he was calm, dispassionate, tolerant and forgiving. He gave no intentional offense and inflicted no causeless pain upon any one however humble his station in life.

Associated with this great kindness, marked charity, benevolence, forbearance, and toleration, was a soul as courageous and inflexible in the right; as fearless and determined in the discharge of duty; as resolute, brave, and daring in the defense of the poor and friendless;

as heroic in the cause of universal emancipation, as ever inspired a hero or martyr.

“ The moistened eye, the trembling lip,
Are not the sign of doubt or fear.”

He possessed the lofty inspiration of Luther, and the inflexible will of Cromwell. In the pursuit of the high and grand purposes of his life, no difficulties could thwart and no danger appall.

CONSCIENCE.

He respected and feared conscience more than the wrath of men or malice of devils. With him conscience was the supreme arbiter, and from its decision he neither desired nor sought appeal. He could truly say:

“ What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do,
This teach me more than Hell to shun,
That more than Heaven to pursue.”

Obedience to the higher law—to the will of Heaven—he held to be of supreme importance, the first and imperative duty. He acknowledged an overruling Providence, for whose power nothing was too vast, and for whose inspection nothing was too minute.

In 1837, when the legislature of his State, in obedience to the pro-slavery sentiment then prevailing, had passed resolutions denouncing the spirit of liberty that was abroad, it was this conscience that prompted him and one other person, subscribing himself Dan

Stone, in opposition to, and in defiance of the frenzied public sentiment, and of the action of the Legislature, to enter their solemn protest against the popular resolutions, and leave their names and acts as a memorial forever, in bold opposition to the institution of human slavery. Their protest avows: "We believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both *injustice* and 'bad policy.'"

He continually displays evidences of his reverent, loyal, brave and heroic spirit, and his God-like character. This gave him courage to face revolution without faltering, to imperil his life in support of the eternal principles of right and justice among men, and to meet danger and even death in the cause that he held most dear.

It was this conviction of right and duty that stayed his arm and supported his great and noble soul when the fiat of emancipation was, by him, proclaimed the law of the land.

It was this conviction that made him serene, resolute and steadfast, though sad and sorrowful, during the long and terrible years of suffering and carnage. It was this conviction that prompted him to brave the dangers of assassination for four years, and at last fall a martyr in the cause of liberty and union—the union of the States, and the rights of man.

Such were the noble qualities, and splendid en-

dowments of the destined leader of the republic. Such were the high qualifications of the great commander to preside over and direct the destinies of his country during a period of dread rebellion and stormy violence, unparalleled in history. Calm and majestic he stood at his post of duty, and, with an anxious heart and prophetic vision, he looked beyond the storms and over the seething gulf of passions, with its thick thronging disasters, to the haven of peace, rest, and fraternal union. In the midst of thick darkness, he saw the morning light, from afar, shining upon the distant hilltops, revealing the tree of liberty heavily laden with the golden fruit of a united, great, prosperous, and powerful nation.

The most eventful and perilous portion of the history of the republic, since the revolution, occurred during the administration of Mr. Lincoln. When he entered upon the duties of his office, the States were in the act of separation, discordant, and belligerent. Secession and rebellion were already inaugurated.

The irrepressible conflict was upon us. Discussion had ceased, and an appeal was taken by the slaveholders to the sword. The question whether the institution of slavery should survive or perish, was by its friends and supporters, submitted to the arbitrament of arms.

On the first day of January, 1863, when the war

had continued two years with unabated fury and with varying success, Mr. Lincoln determined, as a war measure, by the proclamation of emancipation, to obliterate forever its cause and our curse—American slavery. Upon this act alone his great fame may rest, and can safely rest, as long as noble actions, magnanimous deeds, truth and justice are esteemed among men. A portion of the proclamation with the reasons therefor are as follows:

“ And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

On presenting this document to his Cabinet for consideration, Mr. Lincoln said: “ This proclamation is made in fulfillment of a solemn promise made my God. I made a solemn vow before God that if General Lee should be driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by a declaration of freedom to the slaves.”

What a wise, reverential, and heroic spirit is here displayed? This act is worthy of Milton's loftiest song, and Raphael's most sublime and magnificent delineations. Over this act of disenthralment and regeneration the good and noble of every clime and age will rejoice and commemorate the dedication of our land, our dear native land, America,

“ Great empire of the west,

“ The dearest and the best,

to freedom forever, with anthems and huzzas.

Our posterity down to the most distant future, will recur to this event with unabated interest and regard. It not only affected the happiness and fate of four millions of bondsmen, but their masters, and every member of this great republic, and their posterity forever.

By this act, the policy of the government and the course and character of the war were changed. New interests and new parties were enlisted in this sanguinary contest. Thenceforward the war was not prosecuted for the perpetuation of the union of states alone but involved the emancipation of four millions of slaves. Then the bondsmen became interested parties and important factors in this fierce struggle for both liberty and union.

The philanthropists, from this date, from every hamlet and home in every nation and every part of the habitable globe, viewed this contest with tearful eyes, anxious and throbbing hearts, and bestowed their orisons and benedictions upon the army of freedom.

And, all of that vast multitude who fully believed that there was an "Irrepressible Conflict" between Freedom and Slavery, and that one or the other would ultimately prevail, and become dominant on the Continent, and all who believed in the doctrine of a Higher Law; who held in contempt all earthly class distinctions, in whose view the difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind was insignificant, and vanished, when compared with the boundless interval which separated both great and small, from the Common Father of All, united and became earnest co-workers in the cause of emancipation and allies of the republic.

INAUGURAL.

It was my good fortune to be at the Capital of the Nation on the 4th day of March, 1865, to witness the second inaugural of Mr. Lincoln, the President of the United States, and to listen to these thrilling and sacred words as they fell from the lips of our illustrious leader :

“ With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

The war was still raging with desperate fury, but there were many evidences that the end was near at hand. Sherman had made his perilous march to the sea, and was pressing with his victorious army northward. General Grant, the hero of Fort Donaldson, Chatanooga, and Vicksburgh, was moving slowly and steadily upon the Capital of the Confederacy, and preparing for the final assault upon its Queen City, still defiant and bustling with hostile arms ; yet who could tell what disasters might await them ?

And although the great patriot might have anticipated that the end of the contest was approaching, still, whatever joyous anticipations he might have formed of the future, he knew not what difficulties and disasters might lie in his path beyond.

RECEPTION.

I hastened at the first opportunity to do honor to our Great Chieftain, who for four long years had borne such a weight of responsibility, and had borne it so grandly.

And, as he took me by the hand, and I looked into his pallid and anxious face, I saw written there the history of the great struggle; the events of many stormy and disastrous years; grand enterprises inaugurated; sufferings meekly borne; deep thought and dauntless resolution. But over all this anxiety and care, I saw beaming forth his great spirit, conscious of his oneness with God—one in the great work of emancipation, elevation, and the preservation of a great nation.

A war conducted on such a magnificent, expensive, and exhaustive scale as our civil war, although supported by so much interest and resolution, could not last always. The day for surrender at Appomattox at length came.

After the great capitulation, the same causes that had produced the war, that had filled two hundred and fifty thousand graves with fallen heroes, led to the assassination of the President, in the hour of the nation's supremest joy. But ere the perpetration of the sad, shocking, and terrible deed, his generous heart, and forgiving nature, has softened the asperities

of the contestants, and prepared the nation for peace and reconciliation. When the war closed there were no harsh words to retract, no resentments on the part of the chief magistrate to assuage; but on the contrary, during all these years he had offered the olive branch to the foe, and extended a most generous and gracious welcome.

The high purposes of his life were fully accomplished; the rebellion was crushed, the union restored, and the nation free. Then came the last sad act of the drama; and the nation was baptized, and consecrated anew, in the blood of her Great High Priest.

The whole human race were mourners; and standing around his tomb, near, and afar, they poured out their lamentations and tears, and bade his noble spirit a sad farewell. The angels hailed him as heir of life eternal in the Elysian fields of Paradise.

Let us be thankful that we live to enjoy peace, prosperity, and happiness, the rich fruits of the toils and sufferings and sacrifice of those

“ Whose honors with increase of ages grow,
 “ As streams roll down, enlarging as they go.

Mr. Lincoln has now taken his place as a fixed star of the first magnitude in the constellation of great names.

“ Nothing can cover his high fame but heaven,
 No pyramids set off his memories
 But the eternal substance of his greatness,
 To which we leave him.”



